

Listing of the Claims

1 - 41. (Cancelled)

42. (Currently amended) ~~Isolated~~ One or more isolated *E. coli* cells lacking endogenous plasmids and having a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of at least one microorganism selected from the group consisting of *E. coli* MM294, DH5 α and DH10B.

43. (Previously amended) The isolated *E. coli* of claim 42, wherein said isolated *E. coli* are *E. coli* strain W or strain C.

44. (Cancelled)

45. (Previously amended) The isolated *E. coli* of claim 42, wherein said isolated *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

46. (Previously amended) The isolated *E. coli* of claim 42, wherein said isolated *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* DH5 α .

47. (Previously amended) The isolated *E. coli* of claim 42, wherein said isolated *E. coli* have a growth rate that is 5 to 200% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

48. (Previously amended) A method of cloning, comprising:

- (a) obtaining competent *E. coli*;
- (b) transforming said competent *E. coli* with at least one vector;
- (c) selecting transformed *E. coli* containing said at least one vector; and
- (d) culturing said transformed *E. coli*;

wherein said *E. coli* are *E. coli* having a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of at least one microorganism selected from the group consisting of *E. coli* MM294, DH5 α and DH10B.

49. (Previously amended) The method of claim 48, wherein said *E. coli* are *E. coli* strain W or strain C.

50. (Previously amended) The method of claim 49, wherein said *E. coli* do not contain endogenous plasmids.

51. (Previously amended) The method of claim 48, further comprising the step of isolating said vector from said transformed *E. coli*.

52. (Previously added) The method of claim 48, wherein the temperature at which said transformed *E. coli* are cultured is greater than 37°C.

53. (Previously added) The method of claim 52, wherein the temperature at which said transformed *E. coli* are cultured is about 42°C.

54. (Previously added) The method of claim 48, wherein the temperature at which said transformed *E. coli* are cultured is about 42°C.

55. (Previously amended) The method of claim 48, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

56. (Previously amended) The method of claim 48, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* DH5α.

57. (Previously amended) The method of claim 48, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is 5 to 200% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

58. (Previously amended) A method of producing a protein or peptide, comprising:

- (a) obtaining competent *E. coli*;
- (b) transforming into said competent *E. coli* a vector containing a gene encoding a protein or peptide; and
- (c) culturing said transformed *E. coli* under conditions that cause said transformed *E. coli* to produce said protein or peptide;

wherein said *E. coli* are *E. coli* having a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of at least one microorganism selected from the group consisting of *E. coli* MM294, DH5α and DH10B.

59. (Previously amended) The method of claim 58, wherein said *E. coli* are *E. coli* strain W or strain C.

60. (Previously amended) The method of claim 59, wherein said *E. coli* do not contain endogenous plasmids.

61. (Previously amended) The method of claim 58, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

62. (Previously amended) The method of claim 58, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* DH5 α .

63. (Previously amended) The method of claim 58, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is 5 to 200% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

64. (Previously amended) A method of producing *E. coli* for cloning, comprising:

- (a) obtaining *E. coli* having endogenous plasmids and having a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of at least one microorganism selected from the group consisting of *E. coli* MM294, DH5 α and DH10B; and
- (b) curing said *E. coli* of endogenous plasmids.

65. (Previously amended) The method of claim 64, wherein said *E. coli* are *E. coli* strain W or strain C.

66. (Previously amended) The method according to claim 64, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

67. (Previously amended) The method according to claim 64, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* DH5 α .

68. (Previously amended) The method of claim 64, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is 5 to 200% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

69. (Previously amended) A method of transforming *E. coli*, comprising:

- (a) obtaining competent *E. coli*;
- (b) incubating said *E. coli* in the presence of one or more vectors under conditions which cause said one or more vectors to be taken up by said *E. coli*; and
- (c) culturing said *E. coli*;

wherein said *E. coli* are *E. coli* having a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of at least one microorganism selected from the group consisting of *E. coli* MM294, DH5 α and DH10B.

70. (Previously amended) The method of claim 69, wherein said *E. coli* are *E. coli* strain W or strain C.

71. (Previously amended) The method of claim 70, wherein said *E. coli* do not contain endogenous plasmids.

72. (Previously amended) The method according to claim 69, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

73. (Previously amended) The method according to claim 69, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* DH5 α .

74. (Previously amended) The method of claim 69, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is 5 to 200% greater than the growth rate of MM294.

75. (Previously amended) A kit for cloning comprising a container containing *E. coli* lacking endogenous plasmids and having a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of at least one microorganism selected from the group consisting of *E. coli* MM294, DH5 α and DH10B.

76. (Previously added) The kit of claim 75, further comprising one or more vectors.

77. (Previously added) The kit of claim 76, further comprising at least one component selected from the group consisting of one or more restriction enzymes, one or more ligase enzymes, and one or more polymerases.

78. (Previously added) The kit of claim 77, further comprising a container containing a recombination protein.

79. (Previously amended) The kit of claim 75, wherein said *E. coli* are competent.

80. (Previously amended) The kit of claim 79, wherein said *E. coli* are chemically competent.

81. (Previously amended) The kit of claim 79, wherein said *E. coli* are electrocompetent.

82. (Previously amended) The kit of claim 75, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

83. (Previously amended) The kit of claim 75, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* DH5 α .

84. (Previously amended) The kit of claim 75, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is 5 to 200% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

85. (Previously amended) A composition comprising *E. coli*, wherein said *E. coli* lack endogenous plasmids and have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of at least one microorganism selected from the group consisting of *E. coli* MM294, DH5 α and DH10B.

86. (Previously added) The composition of claim 85, further comprising a component selected from the group consisting of a glycerol solution and a competence buffer.

87. (Previously added) The composition of claim 85, further comprising at least one component selected from the group consisting of one or more DNA fragments, one or more ligase enzymes, one or more vectors, one or more buffering salts, and one or more recombination proteins.

88. (Previously amended) The composition of claim 85, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

89. (Previously amended) The composition of claim 85, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* DH5 α .

90. (Previously amended) The composition of claim 85, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is 5 to 200% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

91. (Previously amended) A method of making competent *E. coli*, comprising:

- (a) obtaining *E. coli* having a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of at least one microorganism selected from the group consisting of *E. coli* MM294, DH5 α and DH10B; and
- (b) treating said *E. coli* to make it competent.

92. (Previously amended) The method of claim 91, further comprising the step of curing said *E. coli* of endogenous plasmids.

93. (Previously amended) The method of claim 91, wherein said *E. coli* are *E. coli* strain W or strain C.

94. (Previously amended) The method of claim 91, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

95. (Previously amended) The method of claim 91, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* DH5 α .

96. (Previously amended) The method of claim 91, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is 5 to 200% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

97. (Currently amended) One or more *E. coli* cells having a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of at least one microorganism selected from the group consisting of *E. coli* MM294, DH5 α and DH10B, wherein said *E. coli* has been made competent.

98 - 102. (Cancelled)

103. (Previously added) The isolated *E. coli* of claim 42, wherein said isolated *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 25% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

104. (Previously added) The isolated *E. coli* of claim 42, wherein said isolated *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 50% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

105. (Previously added) The isolated *E. coli* of claim 42, wherein said isolated *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 100% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

106. (Previously added) The method of claim 48, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 25% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

107. (Previously added) The method of claim 48, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 50% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

108. (Previously added) The method of claim 48, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 100% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

109. (Previously added) The method of claim 58, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 25% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

110. (Previously added) The method of claim 58, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 50% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

111. (Previously added) The method of claim 58, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 100% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

112. (Previously added) The method of claim 64, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 25% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

113. (Previously added) The method of claim 64, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 50% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

114. (Previously added) The method of claim 64, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 100% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

115. (Previously added) The method of claim 69, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 25% greater than the growth rate of MM294.

116. (Previously added) The method of claim 69, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 50% greater than the growth rate of MM294.

117. (Previously added) The method of claim 69, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 100% greater than the growth rate of MM294.

118. (Previously amended) The kit of claim 75, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 25% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

119. (Previously amended) The kit of claim 75, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 50% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

120. (Previously amended) The kit of claim 75, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 100% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

121. (Previously amended) The composition of claim 85, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 25% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

122. (Previously amended) The composition of claim 85, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 50% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

123. (Previously amended) The composition of claim 85, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 100% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

124. (Previously added) The method of claim 91, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 25% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

125. (Previously added) The method of claim 91, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 50% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

126. (Previously added) The method of claim 91, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 100% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

127 - 129. (Cancelled)

130. (Previously added) The *E. coli* of claim 97, wherein said *E. coli* are *E. coli* strain W or strain C.

131. (Previously added) The *E. coli* of claim 97, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

132. (Previously added) The *E. coli* of claim 97, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* DH5a.

133. (Previously added) The *E. coli* of claim 97, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is 5 to 200% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

134. (Previously added) The *E. coli* of claim 97, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 25% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

135. (Previously added) The *E. coli* of claim 97, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 50% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

136. (Previously added) The *E. coli* of claim 97, wherein said *E. coli* have a growth rate that is at least 100% greater than the growth rate of *E. coli* MM294.

137. (Previously added) The *E. coli* of claim 97, wherein said *E. coli* are chemically competent.

138. (Previously added) The *E. coli* of claim 97, wherein said *E. coli* are electrocompetent.

139 - 144. (Cancelled)

145. (Previously added) An *E. coli* having deposit number NRRL B-30143 and derivatives thereof.

146. (Previously added) An *E. coli* having deposit number NRRL B-30144 and derivatives thereof.

147. (Currently amended) One or more *E. coli* cells having a growth rate that is at least 5% greater than the growth rate of at least one microorganism selected from the group consisting of NRRL B-30143, NRRL B-30144, ATCC 9637, and ATCC 33625, wherein said *E. coli* has been made competent.

148. (Previously added) The *E. coli* of claim 147, wherein said microorganism is ATCC 9637.

149. (Previously added) The *E. coli* of claim 147, wherein said *E. coli* has a growth rate that is 5 to 200% greater than the growth rate of microorganism ATCC 9637.